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ABSTRACT

During the late sixties and early seventies, many school districts and educational institutions appointed Blacks and other minorities to various positions of responsibility. For the most part, the positions were designed to assist students who were poor and disadvantaged and who would require supportive interventions in order to succeed in an educational setting. However, in the past two to three years, many of these positions have been retrenched, transferred, or simply not funded. This study was designed to assess the impact and trends of retrenchment and its effect upon guidance and student personnel practitioners in school districts and institutions of higher education in New York State. A questionnaire composed of 17 short answer items was mailed to 270 individuals who were listed as members of the New York State Association of Non-White Concerns. The results indicate that the range of the retrenchment phenomenon is wide and will significantly affect the counseling profession and the Black community. Issues are suggested for further exploration. (Author)

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COUNSELOR RETRENCHMENT:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BLACK COMMUNITY

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It is our belief that this study will complement our understanding of this important issue.

Finally, any errors or omissions belong to the author.

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COUNSELOR RETRENCHMENT: IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE BLACK COMMUNITY*

During the late sixties and early seventies, many school districts and educational institutions appointed Blacks and other minorities to various positions of responsibility. For the most part, the positions were designed to assist students who were poor and disadvantaged and who would require supportive interventions in order to succeed in an educational setting. (In fact, it was the exception rather than the rule not to have a minority person in an educational setting.) However, in the past two to three years, many of these positions have been retrenched, transferred, or simply not funded. This has led to charges of demotions and "firings." Moreover, the problem of retrenchment has been exacerbated by controversies which involve quotas, affirmative actions, economics, changes in

*The term "Black Community" as used in this study is descriptive of those individuals who may reside in a geographically designated "Black Community" or those who otherwise live in a wholly or predominately non-white setting. Therefore, in this context, "Black Community" is not applied in the technical, sociological, anthropological, economic, or political sense. Many important works have been completed which bear upon the general area. Among them are Social Research and the Black Community: Selected Issues and Priorities, Lawrence E. Gray, Editor. (Institute for Urban Affairs and Research, Howard University, Washington, D.C. 20001); Dark Ghetto: Dilemma of Social Power, Kenneth B. Clark. (Harper & Row, New York, 1965); Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman, Joyce A. Ladner. (New York: Doubleday, 1971); The Black Family in Modern Society, John H. Scanzoni. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971); and Behind Ghetto Walls, Lee Rainwater. (New York: Aldine Atherton, 1970).

priorities, and seniority considerations. Hence, it has led to allegations by Blacks and other minorities that they are experiencing the "last hired, first fired" syndrome. Consequently, the issue which many individuals have begun to raise bears upon the significant and direct impact which retrenchment or cut-backs have upon minority students, in general, and the Black Community, in particular.

Terms such as "retrenchment" and/or "cut-backs" began to enter educational jargon in the early sixties when it initially related to growth patterns in school populations. It has since come to mean the reduction of school personnel, human services, and educational programs.

A review of the literature reveals that the issue of retrenchment has not received the attention of researchers. Moore and Wagstaff (1974), Levitan and Taggart (1976), Levitan, Johnston, and Taggart (1975), and Glazer (1975), discuss some issues which are tangential to the relevance, importance, and results of this problem. Moreover, reports such as The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United States in 1974, The National Urban League's The State of Black America 1977, and Equal Educational Opportunity for Blacks in U.S. Higher Education (1976), deal with the general economic, political, and educational implications of retrenchment and its effect upon society.

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to assess the impact and trends of retrenchment and its effect upon guidance and student personnel practitioners in school districts and institutions of higher education in New York State. It is, therefore, important to know if retrenchment has limited the opportunity to provide services and assistance to minority group students at all educational levels. Moreover, it will be useful to determine if there are trends which have an effect upon the Black Community. Hence, the following questions should be considered: To what extent have duties and functions changed in the past two years? Have these responsibilities been re-structured in a way which resulted in demotions, promotions, or firings? What has been the impact of "economics" on the retrenchment of guidance professionals in school districts and educational institutions? Are other professionals similarly affected by similar influences? Finally, what is the impact upon minority group students and the Black Community?

Method

In order to collect, analyze, and interpret quantitative and qualitative data, a questionnaire composed of seventeen (17) short answer items was mailed to 270 individuals who were listed as members of New York State Association of Non-White Concerns.

(A Division of The New York State Personnel and Guidance Association.) The Directory of Members (dated January, 1977) and an additional computer list were utilized. A follow-up letter was mailed approximately six weeks after the questionnaires had been mailed. The results were that approximately 40% of the ANWC Division members completed and returned the questionnaires.

Caution should be exercised in extending the analysis and findings beyond this sample since the study is descriptive and exploratory.

The Chi Square Test (χ^2) was utilized to determine and test the independence and relationship of variables by use of contingency tables through cross-tabulations. In order to reach decisions about the results and findings of this study, it was necessary to analyze the data by use of interger frequency distributions, relative frequency distributions, and percentile for various categories and codes. (When the data were subjected to the Chi Square Test (χ^2), none of the cross-tabulated results were statistically significant.)

Finally, many of the questionnaire items provided space for individual written responses. These will be reported as a part of the analysis and findings.

The Sample

Analysis of the data suggest the following:

- (1) With respect to age, the respondents tend to be dispersed evenly among the age categories. The mean age is concentrated in the 36-40 years category with more than 70% of the population less than 45 years old; 84% of the population is less than 50 years old.
- (2) 50% of the population is married; 30.4% is single, while approximately 20% is divorced or separated.
- (3) With regards to racial ethnic background, 78% of the population is Black; 13% is Caucasian; while approximately 9% is Spanish surnamed, Oriental or reported as "other."
- (4) The respondents reported that 47.8% earned salaries between \$10,000-19,999 while 44.6% were less than \$29,999; there were no reported salaries at \$40,000 and above.
- (5) 63% of the population had earned the master's degree while 16% had earned the professional Diploma/Professional Certificate; 15.2% had achieved the doctorate degree.
- (6) With respect to area of study, 55.4% had achieved their degrees in guidance, counseling, or student personnel; approximately 28% of the population had degrees in other fields or areas.

- (7) 42% of the sample had the position of counselor; 18.5% were directors or assistant directors; while 15.2% were supervisors, administrators, chairpersons, or counselor-educators.
- (8) 77% of the sample had seven years or less in their present position; 89% had achieved 11 years or less.
- (9) With respect to level of students served (i.e., college, high school, elementary, etc.), 49% worked with college students; 18.5% served high school students; 12% served students other than high school, middle school, or elementary level.
- (10) 26% of the respondents are employed in school districts and institutions where they are responsible to less than 100 minority students; on the other hand, 49% of the respondents are responsible to a population of 400 or more minority students.
- (11) With respect to the number of minority counselors in a school district or institution, 37% of the respondents reported that there were three or less.
- (12) 41% of the respondents reported that in their present positions, they were classified as administration; 37% were classified as counselors.

- (13) When the respondents were asked to check their duties as these relate to particular categories, most of them were assigned one or more duties. The categories most often checked were personal/social counselor, admissions counselor, vocational/occupational/career counselor, and financial aid. Many individuals performed miscellaneous duties which were related to their primary function. For many respondents, one responsibility was assigned while others had several miscellaneous duties.
- (14) With respect to whether the respondent's duties had changed or remained the same within the past two years, approximately 46% of the respondents reported that their duties had changed while 51% indicated that their duties had remained the same. Among the changes that took place, the following were cited: one respondent reported that "Essentially (my duties) remained the same. Loss of funds is increasing my student load and my paperwork. This decreases the time I spend with students and so changed my duties involuntarily." Another respondent indicated that "recent reductions in school counselors, due to economic conditions has resulted in lack of adequate services

to students and an increase demand on supervisor's time."

- (15) In order to determine if the respondents duties/responsibilities had changed during the past two years which resulted in promotion or if the position remained steady, 45.7% of the population indicated that there had been changes while 51% reported that their duties/responsibilities have remained the same. Among the reasons indicated were position phase-out and return to teaching; particular duties changed due to lay-offs; additional responsibilities added without salary increase, and/or cuts in salary and position. One respondent reported "I am constantly asked to work with more and more minority students when others can't seem to handle the case. No cases are taken off when more are added. It is a difficult situation." Another suggested "I have received no promotion, only more responsibilities. Our financial aid office has now become a five counselor office because of the bureaucracy and new guidelines. We are not bombarded with paper work."

- (16) In regards to the funds which were utilized to

employ the respondents in the study, the following was reported: 29.3% local school board funds; 26.1% state funds; 26.1% combination of federal and state funds; 7.6% federal funds; 5.4% private funds.

- (17) When the issue of whether a school district or institution had been affected by "economics" which has led to some kind of retrenchment, 83.7% of the respondents reported "yes" while 12% indicated "no." Among the reasons suggested for effects of retrenchment were cut-backs, lay-offs and freezes on salary increases; no hiring of personnel including adjunct and part-time personnel; loss of staff through retirement and attrition; untenured staff, faculty without seniority, and paraprofessionals were not re-appointed.

- (18) The respondents were asked "how much retrenchment has taken place? (Approximately)"; the responses were as follows:

30.4%	indicated	10%
18.5%	"	20%
7.6%	"	30%
4.3%	"	40%
9.8%	"	50% and above
29.3%	"	No response

- (19) When the issue of whether salaries had been effected by the factor of retrenchment, 37% answered "yes" while 47.8% responded "no"; 15.2% did not respond.
- (20) When questions of whether the factor of attendance at professional meetings had been influenced by retrenchment, 57.6% responded "yes" and 19.6% indicated "no"; 22.8% gave no response to this item. Generally, less funds or no funds allocated for this activity was cited as a reason. Members attending local, state or national meetings had to bear their own expenses.
- (21) When the issue of whether the respondents knew of other minority counselors who were effected by retrenchment factors, 67.4% indicated "yes" while 22.8% reported "no." For the most part, many respondents indicated that in some districts and institutions most counselors were effected by cut-backs either through an elimination of positions or seniority. These factors occurred in public schools as well as institutions of higher education. Further, one respondent indicated that "....the district will take a 'last hired, first fired' approach to staff cuts. Of the bottom

six people in the guidance department, five are Black. This is generally true of teachers also. I feel this will directly effect minority students as well." Another respondent stated, "I have affiliations with counselors who work in the five boroughs mainly with high school students and because of cut-backs, they are required to teach as well as counsel. Therefore, they cannot spend much time with students who need counseling."

Conclusions, Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this descriptive-exploratory study was to determine the impact of trends in school districts and educational institutions with respect to retrenchment, and the effect it had upon members of the ANWC Division of the New York State Personnel and Guidance Association as reported by the respondents.

As indicated earlier, approximately 40% of the ANWC members responded to the questionnaire. Of this sample, 87% were Black and 13% were non-Black. It follows that the accumulated evidence and the net effect of the critical issues raised in this study are more significantly focused toward the Black respondents and less to non-Blacks.

The following conclusions were developed from data analysis and written responses.

1. Since approximately 82% of the total population is less than 50 years old, this would have implications for future career advancement (and related career changes) for these individuals, particularly since recent federal legislation on mandatory retirement and other exemptions have become critical issues.

Moreover, salary and income are related to the issue of age, since 45% of the respondents have annual incomes between \$20,000-29,999. Consequently, educational institutions and school districts should study and analyze future income (advancement) factors since retrenchment is closely related to fiscal policies and economic issues.

2. With respect to educational background and area of study, 93.5% of this population hold advanced graduate degrees. Concomitantly, 65% were trained in the areas of guidance, counseling, student personnel, and social work. This suggests that the respondents are highly trained to function in positions of responsibility in guidance, counseling, student personnel, and social work. For many individuals in this population, these factors would seem to have implications for future

career advancement, promotions, and vertical movement into important career opportunities. Hence, school districts and institutions should begin to assess and re-assess their (minority) programs and manpower needs (which include minorities) over the next 15-20 years.

3. As it relates to the respondents' present position and length of time in their present positions, two-fifths of the population classified themselves as functioning in administrative/staff positions and more than three-fourths of the respondents had at least seven years in their positions. Consequently, it would seem that the present position held together with the length of service in the position suggest that this sample achieved well above the certification requirements and regulations promulgated by the State of New York which will be in effect on January 1, 1978*

*For specific certification information, refer to Amendments to the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. (Pursuant to Section 207 of Education Law, 80.3). Certificates valid for pupil personnel service (school attendance teacher, school counselor, school dental hygiene teacher, school nurse-teacher, school psychologist, and school social worker). Effective January 1, 1978. (Mimeographed)

4. The duties of administrators and counselors were reported to have increased and the areas in which they functioned appeared to overlap. There was decreased emphasis upon specialized kinds of counseling as more individuals assumed "generalist" approaches. Duties in research, psychology, and social work were least mentioned. For many administrators and counselors, teaching was an additional responsibility. Also, some individuals performed miscellaneous duties as a part of their full-time appointment, e.g., liaison with community agencies, coordinating a drug program, foreign student advisement, assistance in an evening program, student discipline, grants, coordinating tutorial programs, and bilingual counseling. These were most often cited. The reorganization of duties and other changes were principally caused by cut-backs, loss of funds, reduction in number of counselors, changes in counseling approaches, increased case loads and paperwork, and general economic conditions of institutions and school districts.
5. The results of the changes reported here would suggest that individuals are experiencing

significant re-definition of their job assignments. Retrenchment appears to be significantly related to these issues. Counselors, in particular, have less time to deal with student problems. For many, this has increased their level of anxiety which relates to their feelings of uncertainty, insecurity, and powerlessness.

Nonetheless, when individuals reported that their positions had not essentially changed, there seemed to be an implicit threat that economics could alter this. As one respondent states, his "position remains steady" but threatened by the budgetary "crunch." Moreover, as individuals perceived their positions as remaining steady, often responsibilities and duties were added without additional remuneration. In some instances, titles were changed without increased salary. Some individuals perceived this as a promotion. The impact of these changes would seem to have implications for role-functioning particularly among non-White individuals and a precipitous effect upon the Black Community.

6. The fiscal relationship and linkage of employment to funding sources suggest that largely, individuals

in this study were employed through the use of public funds, i.e., state, federal, and local school funds, rather than private funds. Consequently, questions must be raised regarding the role and involvement of non-public agencies which were more prominent during the last decade and the early seventies.

7. More than four-fifths of this sample indicated that their school district or institution had been affected by "economics" which has led to some kind of retrenchment. (The extent of retrenchment was documented in the space provided for description of these factors.) While the list is detailed, it includes extensive lay-offs and program cut-backs; elimination of administrators and counselors; salary freezes; large budgetary cuts; added teaching duties to counselors; retrenchment of staff and programs; loss of guidance services to students; seniority factors which affected non-tenured personnel, attrition through resignation and retirement; attitude of taxpayers toward public education; and school closings.

These areas directly affect school and institutional personnel who have direct responsibilities

to students. The evidence of retrenchment appears to dramatically affect the ability of personnel to serve their student clientele. This would suggest that institutions and school districts have an obligation to assess the impact of this phenomenon and to develop ways in which a high level of service can continue to be delivered. 86% of this population reported that their school districts and institutions had been affected by retrenchment by as much as 30%. While the reported percentages are approximations, it would indicate that a sizable number of this population perceived some changes which were not necessarily positive.

Apparently, salaries were not principally affected by retrenchment. Possibly this was due to mandated raises in public school districts and support of higher educational institutions with public funds, i.e., state, federal, and school board.

Attendance at professional meetings was greatly affected by factors associated with retrenchment. It appears that this kind of professional activity received low priority, and hence, little or no funds were allocated. The result of this indicates

that fewer meetings were attended within the State and to sites outside the State. Since funds were not earmarked for professional meetings, individuals were obligated to attend at their own expense. One respondent summarized the results of this fact by indicating "less frequent meetings have occurred, communication is affected as well as solidarity. Result: weakened impact of the profession on the minority community; weak, ineffective programs." The lack of professional development which accrues out of attending meetings should be carefully analyzed. When the question of whether respondents knew of other counselors serving minority students who were affected by retrenchment, two-thirds answered "yes."

Retrenchment: When one analyzes the impact or trends with respect to this issue, the conclusion is reached that retrenchment is operative. No doubt, its effect is so subtle and profound that it is disguised to operate under the mantle of economics, budget cuts, seniority, or consolidation of counseling services. It must be emphasized that the significant impact is faced by minority counselors. They have the least number of years in their positions, hence, any change for whatever reason, will be viewed as the "last hired and first fired."

This position was held by many individuals who participated in this study.

This suggests that the range of the retrenchment phenomenon is wide. The respondents in this study reported that dismissals took place because of seniority considerations, city and state cutbacks were extensive, reduction of services to minority students was widespread, and consolidation of duties and responsibilities were regularly reported. These factors affected other counselors who were serving minority students.

Further, it was reported that counselors in the City University of New York and the Board of Education in the City of New York were more acutely affected by retrenchment efforts than other individuals throughout the State. The pervasiveness of retrenchment affects other counselors even though they might not have been directly affected. In other words, most counselors were sensitive to any changes which took place in nearby educational institutions or school districts.

Moreover, it would seem to appear that the issues raised in this investigation will significantly affect the counseling profession and the Black Community. For example, the respondents in this study have at least 15-20 years of service to render. This suggests that they will be active until the end of the twentieth century. They are largely non-White. They are in the high-middle to upper-middle income range. They have achieved the master's degree or doctorate. They have served more than

three years. They are more than likely to be serving a population where there are at least 200 minority students, and they are members of counseling staffs with at least three counselors. This description represents economic, political, and educational issues which must be studied and analyzed such as future manpower needs, long-range fiscal plans, and related problems.

Future Implications: The issue of retrenchment warrants the careful attention of this Division and this organization. Most individuals will report that retrenchment does take place but its real impact at the local, state, or national level is not clear. This researcher suggests that the results of retrenchment have become one of those unfortunate consequences of non-white counselors and administrators being obtrusively removed from school districts and educational institutions; this trend must be studied.

Finally, when one reviews the overall effect of retrenchment and its impact as studied in this investigation, the question of racism and the effectiveness of affirmative programs must be raised. Particularly, since Blacks and other minorities are likely to be critically affected, these issues were not raised directly by the respondents. This may be an indication that racism in particular contributes to the inability of institutions and school districts to achieve their goals in affirmatively including non-Whites in positions of responsibility.

The following issues are suggested to further explore this issue:

1. A number of individuals should be commissioned to study and analyze the impact of this issue on a regional or national sample.
2. A study should be conducted to determine the socio-psychological implications of this problem as it relates to Blacks and non-Blacks who serve minority populations.
3. The issue of institutional racism and other related factors such as affirmative action programs should be studied in order to ascertain their effect upon the factors of retrenchment.
4. Members of this Division should develop an agenda which recommends the delivery of counseling services to the Black Community within the next 15-20 years.

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